

**Virginia Department of Health**  
**Office of Licensure and Certification**

---

Effective July 1, 2006

**Design and Construction of Health Care Facilities**

**Introduction**

All construction of new buildings and additions, renovations, alterations or repairs of existing buildings for occupancy as a hospital or nursing facility shall conform to state and local codes, zoning and building ordinances, and the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

In addition, the Office of Licensure and Certification (OLC) has adopted the standards of the American Institute for Architects (AIA) as its facility construction and design criteria.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, building and design standards in 12 VAC 5-371 (nursing facilities) and 12 VAC 5-410 (hospitals) have been replaced with the applicable sections of the current edition of the “Guidelines for Design and Construction of Hospitals and Health Care Facilities” of the AIA. The following sections of the respective regulations were affected by this change:

- (i) 12 VAC 5-371-50 and PART V of 12 VAC 5-371 (Rules and Regulations for the Licensure of Nursing Facilities;
- (ii) PARTS III and V of 12 VAC 5-410 (Rules and Regulations for the Licensure of Hospitals in Virginia).

As a result, OLC has restructured its processes for issuing licenses affected by construction changes. Architects and providers are no longer required to send in construction blueprints or building plans for review by staff of the OLC. In lieu of the previous plans review, OLC requires a copy of the Architect’s certification that the drawings and specifications were prepared according to applicable state building standards and the AIA guideline.

Licenses, if needed, will be issued 10 days *after* receipt of *all* completed paperwork: (i) the Architect’s letter of certification, (ii) Life Safety Code (LSC) from the State Fire Marshal’s Office, and (iii) OLC review of facility policies /procedures, contractual arrangements, and staffing plans, if applicable.

**General information**

A. Requirements of the USBC and local zoning and building ordinances take precedence over compliance with the AIA guidelines.

---

<sup>1</sup> The 2005 General Assembly directed that hospital and nursing facility building standards be “consistent with the current edition of the AIA Guidelines.”

**Virginia Department of Health**  
**Office of Licensure and Certification**

---

Effective July 1, 2006

B. The following medical care facilities shall be designed and constructed according to the applicable sections of the AIA Guidelines:

- (i) Inpatient hospitals,
- (ii) Outpatient surgical centers, and
- (iii) Nursing facilities

C. Project architects shall forward a letter certifying that the drawings and specifications were prepared according to code requirements, including the AIA guidelines. The certification letter should be sent *upon completion of the project* to be filed by the OLC for the applicable facility.

D. A new license will be issued, if needed, 10 days *after receipt* of the following completed paperwork:

- (i) The Architect's letter of certification,
- (ii) LSC from the State Fire Marshal's Office, and
- (iii) OLC review of facility policies /procedures, contractual arrangements, and staffing plans, if applicable.

Note: There can be no variances granted to this provision.

E. Depending on the scope of the project, an accurate and complete licensure application with applicable fee may also be required. Refer to the appropriate licensure regulations to determine when a licensure application is needed.